

Invasive plants and animals

Dense waterweed

Egeria densa



The problem

Dense waterweed is a problem in a number of waterways, where it is easily dispersed from broken stem pieces. This breaking of stems into segments is a natural occurrence in autumn, and is supplemented by unnatural breakage through external damage to the plant. This plant is commonly used in home aquaria and ponds and its appearance in some waterways has been blamed on the illegal dumping of aquarium contents. *Egeria* will thrive in slow-flowing, shallow water or in the presence of high nutrient levels. It forms extremely dense, submerged masses that can seriously retard water flow. This growth may interfere with irrigation equipment, hydro-electric activity and potable water supplies. Other activities like fishing, boating and swimming may also be impeded.

Description

This weed grows in an underwater mass, with stems up to about 1.5 m long. It is usually firmly attached to mud on the creek bed, but occasionally appears as dense mats floating just below the surface. The leaves are up to 4 cm long with tiny serrations on the margins. They grow in whorls of 4 or 5 (sometimes as many as 8) and are most densely clustered at branch ends near growing tips. Flowers are only 2 cm in diameter, and have 3 white petals. Roots are very fine and grow from the lower nodes. A native of Brazil, dense waterweed has caused many problems overseas, particularly in the United States of America.

Management strategies

There are no herbicides registered for the control of dense waterweed in Queensland. The usual removal methods include hand pulling, cutting and digging with machines. The latter may be quite costly, and all methods need to be thorough to reduce the likelihood of regeneration from broken plant pieces.

You can help to prevent this problem by **never** disposing of unwanted aquarium plants or waste in waterways. Act on small weed infestations as soon as possible to avoid a rapidly growing problem.

Declaration details

Dense waterweed is not a declared plant under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*, however, plants that are not declared under state legislation may have control requirements imposed by local governments.

Further information

Further information is available from the vegetation management/weed control/environmental staff at your local government.